



'Ten' satire gets high-five at Sundance

By Gregg Goldstein

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PARK CITY -- In the home stretch of the Sundance Film Festival, ThinkFilm and City Lights Home Entertainment partnered to purchase North American rights to David Wain's Ten Commandments satire "The Ten."

The companies said Friday that they will split the \$4.5 million payout plus a substantial P&A commitment. Because City Lights Pictures was one of the producers, it was unclear just how large ThinkFilm's share of the deal was.

As of Sunday afternoon, the final day of the fest, a source involved in the negotiations said IFC and Netflix were close to closing a low- to mid-six-figure deal for Jessica Yu's extremist docu "Protagonist," repped by Josh Braun of Submarine.

"The numbers are so high this year that you've seen a lot of co-sales," said attorney Andrew Hurwitz, who helped rep big deals for "Joshua," "How She Move" and "Son of Rambow," the last of which went to Paramount Vantage for \$7 million-\$7.5 million plus boxoffice bumps. Hurwitz said there also has been more co-repping of films, such as himself with UTA, Cinetic with WMI and new player Submarine with CAA. "In a world with fewer studio movies and TV deals, agents see this as a bigger business. Deals are becoming more complicated, and different parties bring different strengths."

Other deals close to closing just after the fest included first-time feature director Jake Paltrow's romantic comedy "The Good Night," starring Penelope Cruz, Danny DeVito and Gwyneth Paltrow, with ThinkFilm, the Weinstein Co., Newmarket and Paramount Vantage said to be among the suitors.

"Ten" features a well-known cast, including Paul Rudd, Winona Ryder, Jessica Alba, Adam Brody, Liev Schreiber, Justin Theroux, Gretchen Mol, Oliver Platt and Famke Janssen. An August release is tentatively planned.

ThinkFilm will handle theatrical distribution and obtain TV rights, while City Lights will handle DVD and digital distribution through its partnership with Warner Music Group's WEA Corp. Both companies will share revenue from all distribution venues.

"ThinkFilm was very aggressive, and their ideas for distributing and marketing the film were what won us over," said producer Morris S. Levy, president of MEGA Films.

"Instead of being with a distributor like Weinstein Co. and low on their totem pole, we feel we'll be the high point of their slate."

City Lights Media Group CEO and producer Danny Fisher said the marketing might include outtakes and newly shot, improvisational "documentary footage" of characters that would be webcast.

"We thought it was a hilarious, funny movie and that if we brought it to an audience with brains and style, it would have the ability to do better than (ThinkFilm's) 'The Aristocrats' or 'Strangers With Candy,' " ThinkFilm head of U.S. theatrical Mark Urman said. "It's a very smart brand of seemingly dumb comedy, and we know these guys will be great to work with."

"Ten" premiered Jan. 19 at the Library Center Theatre as one of the most anticipated potential indie buys but earned a mixed reaction and had a slow sales burn. The Weinstein Co. and 2929 Entertainment's distribution channels were among several parties expressing interest in the film. But by late Thursday, ThinkFilm was closing its side of the partnership with City Lights.

"Ten" was produced by City Lights Pictures in association with MEGA Films and Shot Put Pictures. It was produced by Shot Put's Jonathan Stern, Wain, Rudd, Levy and Ken Marino. The executive producers were Fisher, Sam Zietz, Jack Fisher and Michael Almog, and the co-executive producers were Max Sinovoi, Michael Califra, Michael Bassick and Joe Fisher.

The deal was negotiated by ThinkFilm's Urman, with Cinetic representing the filmmakers.

Smaller outlets nabbed two Sundance winners: PBS' "P.O.V." bought the rights to Shimon Dotan's Palestinian prisoner docu "Hot House" during the film's Sundance premiere and announced the deal Sunday, one day after the film won a World Documentary Competition Special Jury Prize. The deal was negotiated by "P.O.V." executive director Simon Kilmurry with Dotan and producer Arik Bernstein. Eva Mulvad and Anja Al Erhayem's Afghani political examination "Enemies of Happiness" from Denmark was picked up by Women Make Movies just a day before it won the World Cinema Jury Prize for documentary feature. Over at Slamdance, Seventh Art Releasing bought worldwide rights to the drug rehab scam drama "Over the GW."

As acquisitions execs took a well-deserved breather and left town, other titles that might see deals close this week include "Interview," the long-gestating "Chicago 10" (rumored to be up for a re-edit) and top Sundance prize winners "Once" and "Padre Nuestro."